Employer Guide

Safe driving tips for fall & winter

New safety challenges arise for drivers in the fall and winter.

As nights become longer this time of year, many of us find ourselves commuting during sunrise and sunset, facing issues of glare and distance perception. At night, drivers lose the advantage of color and contrast available during the day, and depth-perception and peripheral vision are also diminished. And as we age, our ability to see and recover from oncoming glare is reduced and our field of view decreases.

The Motor Vehicle Lighting Council offers these great tips:

Driving with sun glare

- Correct cleaners: Avoid vinyl cleaners that give your dashboard a high-gloss finish as it can turn your dash into a mirror. This is called "veiling glare."
- Good glasses: Wear sunglasses with polarized lenses, which, unlike ordinary lenses, are designed to cut through glare.
- Visor advised: To avoid getting momentarily blinded by sun glare, anticipate areas where glare may be a factor and lower your visor beforehand.

Driving at night

- No flashing: Flashing your high-beams at another driver will only increase the chance that two drivers will not be able to see. Avoid high-beams in fog, as well.
- Be seen: If your car stalls, pull completely off the road beyond the end of the guardrail, if possible, and turn on emergency flashers.
- Avoid glare: Instead of looking at oncoming headlights, look toward the right side of the road and watch the white line marking the outside edge of the traffic lane.
- Keep it clean: Dirty windows can increase glare, while dirty headlights can reduce efficiency by as much as 90 percent. When cleaning, don't forget the inside of your windshield.
- Keep scanning: Look for flashes of light at hilltops, curves and intersections that may indicate the headlights of other vehicles.
- Keep your distance: Four to five seconds of distance between vehicles can make it easier to spot and respond to potential problems on the roadway.
- Slow down: Driving too fast is more dangerous after dark because of decreased visibility.

- Stay alert: If you're tired, try any of the following: open the windows, take breaks, rest your eyes, take a walk or nap, or have some coffee (many Oregon rest stops serve free coffee). Do what works for you.
- Use your mirror: A properly aligned mirror reduces blind spots as well as glare from behind you. The outside rearview mirrors should be adjusted so that the body work of your vehicle is just outside of your view.